

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3730

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 0873

LIMDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, UR, PLO, XF

SUBJ: JORDAN-SOVIET RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: SOVIETS ATTEMPTING TO STABILIZE AND PERHAPS IMPROVE SITUATION IN JORDAN. SOME CURRENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDE PROJECTED VISITS BY SUPREME SOVIET PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION AND SOVIET ACADEMIC AND NEWSPAPER OFFICIALS. SOVIET EFFORTS PROBABLY AIMED AT STAVING OFF INCREASING JORDANIAN PRESSURE ON RELATIONSHIP, BASED ON DEEPSEATED SUSPICION OF SOVIET MOTIVES PLUS JORDAN DISAPPROVAL OF SOVIET ATTITUDE REGARDING PLO AND PALESTINIANS AND TOWARDS GENEVA CONFERENCE. THERE LITTLE CONVERGENCE OF JORDANIAN AND SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN MIDEAST AND THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONS, INCLUDING SOVIET AID OFFERS, CONSIST CHIEFLY OF DIPLOMATIC SHADOW BOXING AND TACTICAL FORAYS. WE SEE LITTLE CHANCE SOVIETS WILL GO FAR IN REVERSING

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THEIR PRESENT POSITION IN JORDANIAN DOGHOUSE. END SUMMARY.

2. RECENT EFFORTS BY SOVIETS TO STABILIZE AND PERHAPS IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION IN JORDAN WARRENT COMMENT AND ASSESSMENT. LATEST INFORMATION TO COME TO OUR ATTENTION IS RECENT BEIRUT NEWSPAPER REPORT (L'ORIENT LE JOUR) SOURCED TO TASS AND CONFIRMED BY JORDANIANS WHICH STATES THAT A SUPREME SOVIET PARLIAMENTARY DEL HAS BEEN INVITED BY THE LEADER OF THE JORDAN SENATE, BAHJAT TALHUNI, TO VISIT JORDAN.

3. BACKGROUND: SOVIETS HAVE NEVER HAD A COMFORTABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN. SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS AND RADICAL ARAB REGIMES AS WELL AS FOR JORDAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAVE ALL BEEN BARRIERS TO CLOSER RELATIONSHIP. RECENTLY, SOVIET MISSION HAS COME UNDER PRESSURE TO REDUCE ITS RATHER LARGE STAFF, IN LARGE MEASURE BECAUSE UNDER THE GUISE OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IT MADE A NUMBER OF MALADROIT MOVES WHICH GOJ CONSIDERED TO BE PRO-PALESTINIAN AND ANTI-REGIME. HAVING BEEN SERVED NOTICE TO REDUCE DRASTICALLY, SOVIET MISSION SINCE EARLY WINTER HAS BEEN LEFT SQUIRMING.

4. HOWEVER WITHIN RECENT WEEKS, KING AND PRIME MINISTER HAVE MENTIONED TO AMBASSADOR FACT THAT SOVIETS ARE MAKING NEW EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH JORDAN. WHILE ALL THE SPECIFICS ARE NOT YET FULLY CLEAR, IT APPEARS THAT UNOFFICIAL EMISSARIES IN THE FORM OF SOVIET ACADEMICS AND NEWSPAPER OFFICIAL HAVE VISITED KING, AND PROVIDED HIM WITH INDICATION THAT SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO PATCH UP THEIR RELATIONS, INCLUDING SENDING A SUPREME SOVIET DELEGATION. THESE EFFORTS, INITIALLY WITHOUT BENEFIT OF A SOVIET EMBASSY INTRODUCTION, WERE FOLLOWED UP BY EMBASSY DELIVERY OF A LETTER, APPARENTLY FROM SECRETARY-GENERAL BREZHNEV, ASKING FOR VISIT. JORDANIANS HERE TOLD SOVIETS THEY ARE WELCOME TO COME AND HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO EASE THEIR DEMAND THAT THE SOVIET DIPLOMATIC STAFF BE REDUCED DRASTICALLY.

5. IT APPEARS TO US THAT AT LEAST THE INITIAL SOVIET EFFORT IS AIMED AT TRYING TO STAVE OFF INCREASING JORDANIAN PRESSURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP. APPARENTLY SOVIETS STILL VALUE THEIR POSITION IN JORDAN, WHICH WHILE NOT GREAT GIVES THEM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE IN THE ARAB WORLD, CONTACTS WITH SOME PALESTINIANS, AND PERHAPS INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION POSSIBILITIES NOT REALIZABLE

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ELSEWHERE.

6. ON POLITICAL ISSUES, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THERE IS LITTLE CONJUNCTION OF JORDANIAN AND SOVIET INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THEY DISAGREE ON THE ROLE AND POSITION OF THE PLO, ALTHOUGH SOVIET HESITANCY AT RECOGNIZING THE PLO AS THE "SOLE, LEGITIMATE" REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS, SOVIET APPARENT RESERVATION ON SUPPORTING A PLO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, AND THE SLOW PACE OF

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PLO OFFICE IN MOSCOW (FOR SEEMINGLY PLO, NOT SOVIET-RELATED CAUSES) ARE ALL MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES. NEVERTHELESS, OFFICIAL SUSPICIONS OF THE SOVIETS REMAIN DEEP WITH MOST JORDANIANS BELIEVING THAT THE PLO MOVE TO THE UN AND ITS SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE AT THE RABAT SUMMIT WERE PRODUCTS OF SOVIET ENGINEERING. ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE THERE IS ALSO A SPLIT VIEW. JORDANIANS BELIEVE RABAT HAS TAKEN THEM OUT OF PLAY AND THAT, AS A RESULT, THEIR EARLIER DECISION TO FREEZE THEMSELVES ON GENEVA AND GENEVA-CONNECTED NEGOTIATIONS IS FIRM. KING HAS MAINTAINED PUBLICLY HE SEES NO REASON TO GO TO GENEVA. ON THE OTHER HAND HE TENDS TO TEMPER THAT VIEW WITH IDEA THAT IF OTHERS REALLY WANT HIM TO GO, HE WILL DO SO, BUT THEN ENDS UP SAYING "BUT WHAT WOULD I DO THERE?". THUS, ON TWO ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO BOTH, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE QUESTION OF GENEVA, THERE REMAINS A GREAT DISTANCE BETWEEN JORDANIAN AND SOVIET POSITIONS.

7. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER, HE MENTIONED TO AMBASSADOR, WHEN TALK TURNED TO BUILDING OF MAQARIN DAM ON YARMOUK RIVER, THAT SOV'S HAD OFFERED TO HELP JORDAN BUILD IT. HE ADDED THAT THEY HAD BUILT ASWAN AND EUPHRATES DAM AND WERE DYING TO BUILD A THIRD BIG DAM IN THE AREA. ASIDE FROM PRIME MINISTER'S JUDGEMENT ABOUT RELATIVE IMPORTANCE IN WORLD TERMS OF THIS CONSTRUCTION PROJECT AND PROBABLE DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE U.S. INTEREST BY POINTING TO A SOVIET BOGEYMAN, WE SEE NO INDICATION JORDAN IS SERIOUSLY INTERESTED. IT CONTRASTS WITH A STATEMENT MADE BY PRIME MINISTER IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE ABOVE CONVERSATION THAT SOVIETS HAD BEEN PRESSING TO BUILD A HOUSING FACTORY, HE HAD HELD THEM OFF FOR A YEAR, AND WOULD HOLD THEM OFF FOR ANOTHER YEAR BY TELLING THEM TIME HAD PASSED AND THEY SHOULD NOW GO BACK AND REDRAW THEIR PLANS. HE WAS CLEARLY DEEP IN A GIANT STALL ON THE SOVIET HOUSING PROJECT.

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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8. CONCLUSION: WE SEE LITTLE CHANCE THAT SOVIETS WILL GO FAR IN REVERSING THEIR PRESENT POSITION IN THE DOG HOUSE. AT BEST WE BELIEVE THE JORDANIANS WILL CONTINUE TO PERMIT PRESENT SIZED SOVIET OPERATION (ABOUT 3/4 TO 7/8 THE SIZE OF U.S. EMBASSY), RECEIVE SUPREME SOVIET VISITORS, BUT STALL ON AID SUGGESTIONS. WE SEE LITTLE LIKLIHOOD OF SOVIETS DOING ANYTHING MORE THAN AGREEING TO DISAGREE WITH JORDANIANS OVER GENEVA AND PLO. ANY CHANGE IN SUCH SOVIET POSITION WOULD PROBABLY BE RESISTED NOT ONLY BY PLO BUT ALSO BY SYRIA. IN SUM THEN, OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT PRESENT SOVIET EFFORTS ARE DESIGNED TO CUT LOSSES AND SEE WHAT HOLES MIGHT BE OPENED UP TO EXPLOIT.

9. SOVIET MOTIVATIONS ARE SOMEWHAT HARDER TO CALCULATE. WE DO NOT DISCOUNT FACT THAT JORDANIANS HAVE RECENTLY COMPLAINED SOMEWHAT MORE VOCALLY THAN NORMAL ABOUT THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT AT NOT GETTING AT LEAST A WEST BANK SETTLEMENT IN THE SUMMER OF 1974, AND HAVE

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TALKED RATHER OPENLY ALSO OF U.S. INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO HELP IN THAT EFFORT. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THE SOVIETS MAY BE ATTRACTED BY THE IDEA THAT THE JORDANIANS NOW HAVE MONEY TO SPEND ON ARMS. AND THAT THE U.S. SEEMS TO BE DRAGGING ITS FEET ON SELLING AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT. (SOVIET DEFENSE ATTACHE IS DEFINITELY AWARE OF THIS POINT). ONCE IN THE PAST, WHEN THE U.S. WAS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE EQUIPMENT (ARTILLERY) THE SOVIETS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO MOVE IN WITH A SALE OF THEIR OWN. WE OF COURSE CANNOT BE SURE OF THEIR PERSPECTIVE, BUT THE ABOVE POINTS MIGHT WELL

FIGURE IN THEIR ASSESSMENT.
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